

Claims

- [c1] 1. A method, comprising the steps of:
- (a) offering, to a recipient of voice mail services, a subscription to voice mail messages pertaining to a particular subject matter; and
 - (b) providing to said recipient, pursuant to said offering, a voice mail message pertaining to the particular subject matter.
- [c2] 2. A method comprising the steps of:
- (a) identifying recipients of voice mail services who have elected to subscribe to voice mail messages pertaining to a particular subject matter; and
 - (b) providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message pertaining to the particular subject matter.
- [c3] 3. A method, comprising the steps of:
- (a) offering, to recipients of voice mail services, subscriptions to voice mail messages pertaining to one or more particular subject matters; and
 - (b) at periodic intervals,
 - (i) identifying those recipients who have elected to subscribe to voice mail messages of said offering,

and

(ii) providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering.

[c4] 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said step of offering includes offering to provide a subscription to voice mail messages pertaining to a single particular subject matter.

[c5] 5. The method of claim 3, wherein said step of offering includes offering to provide a subscription to voice mail messages pertaining to a plurality of particular subject matters.

[c6] 6. The method of claim 5, wherein subscription to voice mail messages is offered on a per subject matter basis.

[c7] 7. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of charging a subscription fee on a per subject matter basis.

[c8] 8. The method of claim 5, further comprising receiving, from a particular recipient electing to subscribe to voice mail messages, an identification of a selection of particular subject matters out of the plurality of particular subject matters of said offering.

[c9] 9. The method of claim 3, wherein said periodic intervals

comprises days.

[c10] 10. The method of claim 3, wherein said periodic intervals comprises weeks.

[c11] 11. The method of claim 3, wherein said periodic intervals comprises months.

[c12] 12. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of charging a fee for the subscription to the voice mail messages of said offering.

[c13] 13. The method of claim 3, wherein no fee is charged for the subscription to the voice mail messages of said offering.

[c14] 14. The method of claim 3, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a sports topic.

[c15] 15. The method of claim 3, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a political topic.

[c16] 16. The method of claim 3, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a religious topic.

[c17] 17. The method of claim 3, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a news topic.

[c18] 18. A voice mail message subscription service including a method, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) offering to provide
 - (i) voice mail services and, in conjunction therewith,
 - (ii) a subscription to voice mail messages pertaining to one or more particular subject matters; and
- (b) at periodic intervals,
 - (i) identifying recipients of the voice mail services of said offering who, pursuant to said offering, have elected to subscribe to the voice mail messages of said offering, and
 - (ii) providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering.

[c19] 19. A voice mail message subscription service including a method, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) offering to provide, to recipients of voice mail services, subscriptions to voice mail messages pertaining to one or more particular subject matters; and
- (b) at periodic intervals,
 - (i) identifying recipients of the voice mail services who, pursuant to said offering, have elected to subscribe to voice mail messages of said offering, and
 - (ii) providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering.

- [c20] 20. The method of claim 19, wherein said step of offering includes offering to provide a subscription to voice mail messages pertaining to a single particular subject matter.
- [c21] 21. The method of claim 19, wherein said step of offering includes offering to provide a subscription to voice mail messages pertaining to a plurality of particular subject matters.
- [c22] 22. The method of claim 21, wherein subscription to voice mail messages is offered on a per subject matter basis.
- [c23] 23. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of charging a subscription fee on a per subject matter basis.
- [c24] 24. The method of claim 21, further comprising receiving, from a particular recipient electing to subscribe to voice mail messages, an identification of a selection of particular subject matters out of the plurality of particular subject matters of said offering.
- [c25] 25. The method of claim 19, wherein said periodic intervals comprise days.
- [c26] 26. The method of claim 19, wherein said periodic inter-

vals comprise weeks.

- [c27] 27. The method of claim 19, wherein said periodic intervals are intermittent.
- [c28] 28. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of charging a fee for the subscription to the voice mail messages.
- [c29] 29. The method of claim 19, wherein no fee is charged for the subscription to the voice mail messages.
- [c30] 30. The method of claim 19, wherein said step of providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering comprises the step of making a voice mail message of said offering accessible for listening by each of said identified recipients.
- [c31] 31. The method of claim 19, wherein said step of providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering comprises the step of, for each particular one of said identified recipients, playing the same digital audio file that represents said provided voice mail message of said offering.
- [c32] 32. The method of claim 19, wherein said step of providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering comprises the step of, for each particular

said identified recipient, distributing to a voice mail inbox of the particular said identified recipient a digital audio file that represents said provided voice mail message of said offering.

[c33] 33. The method of claim 19, wherein said step of providing to said identified recipients a voice mail message of said offering comprises the step of, for each particular said identified recipient, copying to a voice mail inbox of the particular said identified recipient a digital audio file that represents said provided voice mail message of said offering.

[c34] 34. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 19, wherein a voice mail service provider that provides voice mail services to the recipients also performs the steps of the method.

[c35] 35. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 34, wherein said step of providing the voice mail message comprises the steps, by the voice mail service provider, of receiving the voice mail message, and then making the voice mail message accessible through voice mail for recipient listening.

[c36] 36. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 34, wherein said provided voice mail message is created

by other than the voice mail service provider.

- [c37] 37. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 34, wherein said provided voice mail message is created by a voice mail message provider.
- [c38] 38. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 37, wherein said voice mail message provider is different from the voice mail service provider.
- [c39] 39. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 37, further comprising the step of charging a fee for said providing of the voice mail message pertaining to the particular subject matter.
- [c40] 40. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 39, further comprising the step of allocating said charged fee between the voice mail service provider and the voice mail message provider.
- [c41] 41. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 39, further comprising the step of allocating said charged fee between the voice mail service provider, the voice mail message provider, and an organization associated with the particular subject matter.
- [c42] 42. The voice mail message subscription service of claim 19, wherein the provision of a subscription to voice mail

messages pertaining to one or more particular subject matters represents an optional add-on service to the voice mail services.

[c43] 43. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of creating said provided voice mail message of said offering.

[c44] 44. The method of claim 43, wherein said step of creating said provided voice mail message of said offering includes the step of recording the voice of a particular person.

[c45] 45. The method of claim 44, wherein the particular person comprises a person that is famous with respect to one or more particular subject matters of said offering.

[c46] 46. The method of claim 44, wherein a subject matter of the one or more particular subject matters comprises stock car racing and the person comprises a driver.

[c47] 47. The method of claim 44, wherein a subject matter of the one or more particular subject matters comprises a sports team and the person comprises a coach or player of the team.

[c48] 48. The method of claim 44, wherein a subject matter of the one or more particular subject matters comprises

bass fishing and the person comprises a recognized expert in bass fishing.

[c49] 49. The method of claim 44, wherein said identified recipients collectively select the particular person.

[c50] 50. The method of claim 43, wherein identified recipients vote to select the particular person.

[c51] 51. The method of claim 43, wherein identified recipients vote to select the particular person out of a defined group of people.

[c52] 52. The method of claim 19, wherein a particular subject matter of said offering comprises a sports topic.

[c53] 53. The method of claim 52, wherein the sports topic pertains to a high-school sport, a college sport, a pro sport, or an Olympic sport.

[c54] 54. The method of claim 52, wherein the sports topic pertains to baseball, football, basketball, hockey, soccer, tennis, golf, bowling, volleyball, fishing or hunting.

[c55] 55. The method of claim 52, wherein the sports topic pertains to racing.

[c56] 56. The method of claim 55, wherein the racing comprises automobile racing, boat racing, motorcycle racing,

bicycle racing, foot racing, horse racing, or dog racing.

[c57] 57. The method of claim 19, wherein a particular subject matter of said offering comprises a political topic.

[c58] 58. The method of claim 19, wherein a particular subject matter of said offering comprises a religious topic.

[c59] 59. The method of claim 19, wherein a particular subject matter of said offering comprises a news topic.

[c60] 60. A method of providing audible messages that pertain to one or more particular subject matters to subscribers who have elected to receive the audible messages, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) maintaining subscriber specific records, each record including one or more distribution indicators of a respective subscriber, each distribution indicator corresponding to a particular subject matter for which the respective subscriber has elected to receive audible messages;

(b) creating an audible message pertaining to a certain one of the particular subject matters;

(c) associating a distribution indicator with said created audible message, said associated distribution indicator corresponding to the certain one of the particular subject matters; and

(d) distributing said created audible message to each subscriber whose record includes the distribution indicator corresponding to said associated distribution indicator of said created audible message.

- [c61] 61. The method of claim 60, wherein each subscriber specific record further includes a destination indicator for the subscriber.
- [c62] 62. The method of claim 61, wherein a destination indicator comprises a telephone number.
- [c63] 63. The method of claim 62, wherein a destination of the destination indicator comprises a telephone, a telephone answering machine, a voice mail inbox, or a telephone answering service.
- [c64] 64. The method of claim 61, wherein distributing the audible message comprises transmitting the audible message as a telephony signal in real time.
- [c65] 65. The method of claim 61, wherein distributing the audible message comprises transmitting the audible message in data packets.
- [c66] 66. The method of claim 61, wherein the audible message comprises a digital audio file.
- [c67] 67. The method of claim 61, wherein a destination indi-

cator comprises an email address.

[c68] 68. The method of claim 60, wherein distributing the audible message comprises distributing an indication of availability of the audible message.

[c69] 69. The method of claim 60, further comprising, prior to the step of distributing the audible message, the step of generating an indication of availability of the audible message.

[c70] 70. The method of claim 60, further comprising the step of receiving from a particular subscriber an election to receive audible messages pertaining to another particular subject matter, and including in the record of the particular subscriber a distribution indicator corresponding to this other particular subject matter.

[c71] 71. The method of claim 60, further comprising the step of receiving from a new subscriber an election to receive audible messages pertaining to a particular subject matter, and generating a new record for the new subscriber, said generated record including a distribution indicator corresponding to the particular subject matter of the election.

[c72] 72. The method of claim 60, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a sports topic.

- [c73] 73. The method of claim 60, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a political topic.
- [c74] 74. The method of claim 60, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a religious topic.
- [c75] 75. The method of claim 60, wherein a particular subject matter comprises a news topic.
- [c76] 76. An audible message subscription service, including a method comprising the steps of:
- (a) identifying recipients who have elected to subscribe to audible messages pertaining to one or more predefined subject matters;
 - (b) creating an audible message pertaining to a particular one of the predefined subject matters; and
 - (c) providing said created audible message to said identified recipients.
- [c77] 77. The method of claim 76, further comprising the step of offering to provide subscriptions to audible messages pertaining to the predefined subject matters, and wherein said identified recipients have elected to subscribe to the audible messages in response to said offering.
- [c78] 78. The method of claim 77, wherein said step of offer-

ing includes offering to provide a subscription to audible messages pertaining to a single predefined subject matter.

- [c79] 79. The method of claim 77, wherein said step of offering includes offering to provide a subscription to audible messages pertaining to a plurality of predefined subject matters.
- [c80] 80. The method of claim 79, further comprising receiving, from a particular recipient electing to subscribe to audible messages, an identification of a selection of predefined subject matters out of the plurality of predefined subject matters of said offering.
- [c81] 81. The method of claim 76, further comprising repeating steps (b) and (c) at periodic intervals.
- [c82] 82. The method of claim 81, wherein said periodic intervals comprise days.
- [c83] 83. The method of claim 81, wherein said periodic intervals comprise weeks.
- [c84] 84. The method of claim 81, wherein said periodic intervals are intermittent.
- [c85] 85. The method of claim 76, wherein the predefined subject matter comprises a sports topic.

[c86] 86. The method of claim 76, wherein the predefined subject matter comprises a political topic.

[c87] 87. The method of claim 76, wherein the predefined subject matter comprises a religious topic.

[c88] 88. The method of claim 76, wherein the predefined subject matter comprises a news topic.